

SENIOR CONNECTION

Information for Seniors & Caregivers

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SPRING 2009

Living Today for a Better Tomorrow



By Robert P. Dwyer, Ph.D.,
Executive Director

This year's Older Americans Month theme is apparently prophetic during these tough economic times. For too many people, living today has simply meant living today with no mention of what that means for future times. Yet, for the vast majority of us working in elder care, we know that the way we live in this moment has great portent for the future. Whether we talk about preventative healthcare, financial planning, or even home repair and maintenance, the effect of how we live "in the moment" will have a definitive effect, or perhaps even take a negative toll, on what tomorrow brings.

Fact is that the current economic crisis is at least a partial result of not paying attention to the way our actions affect the future. Overuse of credit, over mortgage of property and the like have helped to dig us deeply into the muck and mire of failing financial markets. People we know may be jobless, even homeless. Food costs have soared and the cost of daily living has skyrocketed.

Yet for all the doom and gloom that abounds (watching television news has become a real chore for me) it appears that issues facing seniors have floated to the top of the economic recovery bills.

As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, President Obama and his Administration included several pieces that will directly affect seniors.

First, this law will provide for a one-time payment of \$250 to each person receiving Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This will be done automatically, so there's no need to contact the Social Security office unless you don't get your check by June 4th. Now, all Social Security and SSI beneficiaries are eligible for this unless you are under some kind of penalty, are behind in child support payments, etc. But for the vast majority of those receiving benefits, the checks will be in the mail.

In addition to this one time payment, additional money has been allocated for SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps) and the Title III Nutrition Program. Increased benefits through these programs will help more seniors in need with getting food on their tables. Fact is that the Title III program has been facing increased budget pressure, with many programs cutting back and instituting waiting lists.

There will be other benefits that we all will see as time rolls through. But in the end, each American needs to take some responsibility for how we live today, so that our tomorrows, and the tomorrows of our children and grandchildren, will be full of hope.

Living Today
for a Better Tomorrow
OLDER AMERICANS MONTH MAY 2009

The REAL Cost of Caregiving

Have you ever thought how much “unpaid family caregiving” actually costs? A new study by AARP has helped put some numbers on this that are truly amazing.

According to an AARP report entitled “Valuing the Invaluable: The Economic View of Family Caregiving, 2008 Update”, unpaid family caregivers provide an estimated \$375 billion in care to their family members. A previous study in 2006 showed this cost at \$350 billion.

At any given point in 2007, around 34 million family caregivers were providing care. While over the course of the year, nearly 52 million family members were providing care. The \$375 billion figure is based on “34 million caregivers age 18 or older providing an average of 21 hours of care per week to adults with limitations in daily activities, at an average value of \$10.10 per hour,” according to an AARP release. The low hourly rate was due to the fact that caregivers provide a wide range of both skilled and unskilled assistance.

The report also found that the economic value of family caregiving exceeded total Medicaid spending for long-term care in all states, and was more than three times as high in 36 states. The report also noted that family caregivers help make up for a general shortage of in-home service providers.

The report concludes that there is a need to aid family caregivers in their work by:

- 1) Implementing “family-friendly” workplace policies such as telecommuting and flextime;
- 2) Providing home and community based support for caregivers to ensure that their needs are met;
- 3) Expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act to provide paid leave for more workers and for longer times, and
- 4) Provide adequate funding for respite programs.

Here in Massachusetts, Mass Home Care has long advocated for payment to family caregivers through various State programs. While there is some accommodation for this, much more needs to be done.

(Many thanks to AARP and to the Older Americans Report of December 19, 2008.)

Officers Reelected

Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging has announced its officers for the coming year. Elected at the Annual Business Meeting on March 27 were:

President: Richard P. Burke
Vice-President: Bruce Leger
Treasurer: Chris Gillissen
Secretary: Dorothy Wright

Also, Millie Marion of Templeton and Una Rice of Uxbridge retired after their years of service.

Congratulations to all, and thanks for their good efforts on behalf of CMAA!



Una Rice and Millie Marion, CMAA Board Members retired after their years of service.

CMAA To Address Critical Needs of Elders

CMAA has completed a needs assessment process based on focus groups, survey data and other information collected on the 61 cities and towns in our region. As a result of this process, we have identified a number of priorities to be addressed through Older Americans Act funding for fiscal years 2010 and 2011. To see the entire Title III Funding Priorities go to our website SeniorConnection.org then follow this link: http://www.seniorconnection.org/priorities_2010.pdf.

Access for Elders Title III-B – Supportive Services

- A. Outreach and Interpretation programs** targeting one or more of the following groups: minority and/or non-English speaking populations, rural, low-income, disabled, Native Americans, and Alzheimer's victims and their caregivers.
- B. Medical Transportation** Medical transportation and/or escorted transportation where necessary to access health care.

Crisis Intervention Short term intensive counseling or problem solving assistance to help seniors deal with crisis situations

Emergency Home Repair Repair and maintenance services for elders who are at risk from health and safety hazards or at risk of being homeless.

Money Management for eligible seniors to provide financial counseling, checkbook balancing, bill paying and related services.

Legal Services (mandated) /Guardianship Help in obtaining or restoring public benefits, guardianship services, resolving housing problems or other appropriate concerns.

Long Term Ombudsman (mandated) Volunteers and stipended staff serving nursing home residents by investigating and resolving complaints made by the residents, or on their behalf.

III-C - Nutrition Services Regional congregate and home delivered meal services.

III-D - Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services May focus on: Nutrition Screening/Education, Health Education (including Mental Health), Cancer Awareness, Chronic Disease Management, Exercise, Substance Abuse, Cardiovascular Health, Respiratory Health and Medication Management.

GARDENING CAN BE BENEFICIAL TO OLDER ADULTS

In research published in February in the journal HortScience, researchers discovered that among the other health benefits of gardening is keeping older hands strong and nimble. The research appearing in HortScience, comes from a study of Kansas State University researchers that assessed 15 areas of health in older adults, from both those who garden and those who don't. The researchers looked at measurements like bone mineral density, sleep quality, physical fitness, hand strength and psychological well-being.

Candice Shoemaker, a K-State researcher, said that differences between gardeners and non-gardeners showed up in a few health assessments like hand strength, overall physical health and self esteem, results from some of the other areas were more ambiguous.

The researchers showed that older adults can use gardening to achieve a moderate activity level and meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's exercise recommendations.

Thank you FCHP!

Again this year, CMAA has received a \$2500 grant from Fallon Community Health Plan in support of our SeniorConnection website. Many thanks to Eric Schultz and the FCHP family for their continued help in "Helping You at the Crossroads of Elder Care!"



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Spring 2009

ElderCare 2009 Help Yourself. Enrich Your Life.

May 12, 2009

The Manor, 42 West Boylston Street, West Boylston, MA 01583

*Free Event for Seniors and Caregivers
60 Exhibiting Companies! Giveaways & Raffles! Refreshments!*

Seminars:

- 10:30AM-11:00AM Identity Theft and Fraud: What you Need to Know to Protect Yourself
Presented by Elisabeth Haddad, Office of District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr.
- 11:30AM-12:00PM Eating Right When Your Budget is Tight
Presented by Nicole Reynolds, Elder Services of Worcester
- 1:00PM-1:30PM Helping with the Medications you Need: Safety, Compliance, & Cost
Presented by Colleen Massey, MassMedLine

Entertainment:

- 11:00AM Fitness Demo with SilverSneakers
- 12:00PM Ballroom Dancing with Dancers of Central MA-USABDA
- 1:00PM Live Music with Cranberry Jazz
- 2:30PM Raffle Winners Announced

Health Screenings:

Glucose, Grip Strength, Blood Pressure, Fall Prevention, Video Otoscope